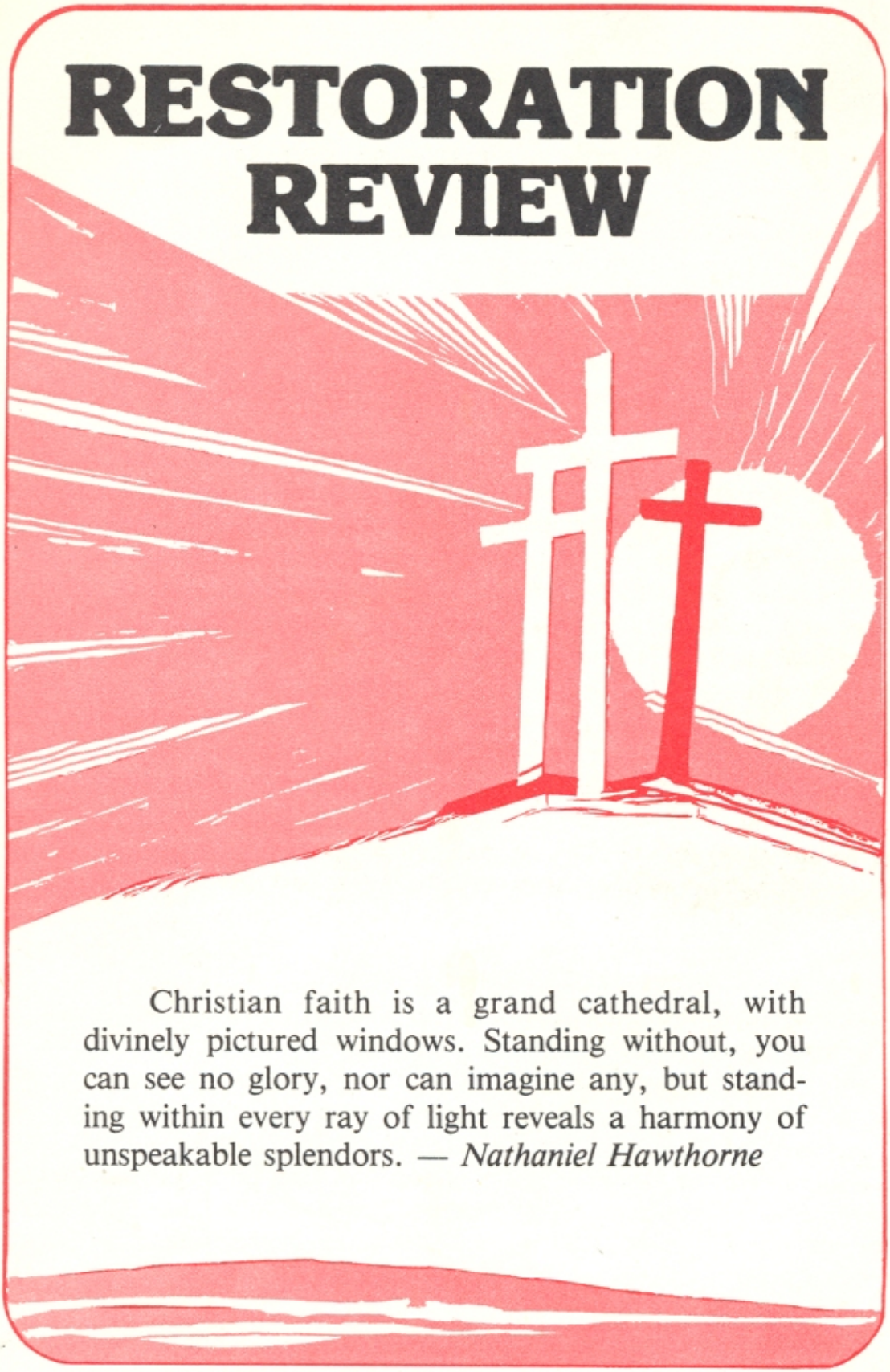
# RESTORATION REVIEW



Christian faith is a grand cathedral, with divinely pictured windows. Standing without, you can see no glory, nor can imagine any, but standing within every ray of light reveals a harmony of unspeakable splendors. — *Nathaniel Hawthorne*

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**Volume 23, No. 10** **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **December 1981**

*Jesus Today . . .*

## ON THE NATURE OF FAITH

One of our Tennessee readers, Phil Elam, sends us a provocative letter about the nature of faith. Being a reader of the old *Millennial Harbinger,* he quotes Dr. Robert Richardson to the effect that the faith that saves is "a believing on or into Christ." The doctor went on to say, "The question, therefore, in regard to faith, was not, in the beginning, 'What do you believe? " which is the eager and sole inquiry of modern religious parties; but 'In whom do you believe?'"

Phil notes that our own Church of Christ people are like the "modern religious parties" that Richardson refers to, for we seem more concerned with the *what* of believing than the *who* of believing. Richardson was strong on the personal aspect of faith, showing that it is centered in a person rather than any system of doctrine. This impresses Phil, who is suspicious that we in Churches of Christ have "trusted in the accuracy of doctrinal knowledge instead of Jesus."

There is some justification for our Tennessee brother's concern, for even when we see that a person has a vibrant faith in Christ (often more impressive than our own!) we are often eager to "convert" him to a set of interpretations that could well be called our own. Being "right" is something more than loyalty to Christ, or, to put it another way, we tend to equate *our* system with loyalty to Christ. We are often guilty, therefore, of moving people from a Baptist or Methodist view of things to our way of thinking. Faith in the person of Christ gets lost in the shuffle. It is a subtle shift from *personal* faith, which is evident in Scripture, to a *doctrinal* faith, which is the life blood of sectarianism.

It is foolish for anyone to minimize doctrine, for it is crucial to Christian growth. It is a matter of putting doctrine in right perspective, as *pointing to* the object of our faith rather than being *itself* the object of our faith. Even more important, we must be aware that what we call "doctrine" is not always the clear statements of Scripture but our own traditions. We are therefore guilty of a subtle kind of humanism: *basing faith upon our particular interpretation of Scripture.* Such humanism brings the censure of Christ himself upon us: "You err in that you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God."

This caused Jesus to chastise the Pharisees with "You leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men" (Mk. 7:8). The Pharisees consequently honored God with their lips but not their hearts, which may well be man's greatest sin --- the great *religious* sin! Mk. 7:9 makes it clear that God's people may actually *reject* the Scriptures they

claim to honor, by making too much of their traditions. And traditions are simply what we make the Scriptures to mean. If the Pharisees could do this by their doctrine of Corban (by which they negated what the Scriptures taught them to do for their parents, see Mk. 7:10), we can do it by an overemphasis upon such externals as the Lord's Supper (the day and hour has to be exact!) and baptism (one's understanding has to conform to ours!).

In all this something tragic happens to faith, for it becomes faith in things, ideas, practices, and even "the right church." I recall one sister pleading with me to go through the New Testament and mark the things that she had to believe. This is a fearful way to live the Christian life, this struggle to be right about everything. We must come to see that this is *not* the faith that Christ brings us. "You search the scriptures," our Lord said, "because you think that in them you have eternal life; and yet it is they that bear witness of me" (Jn. 5:39). They lost their Messiah in a Book! They had the Scriptures, but not Jesus. He goes on to say: *you refuse to come to me that you may have life*. How tragic it is for the head to be full and the heart empty!

It is a crucial error for us to mistake the nature of faith, as the Pharisees did when they supposed the ultimate was in a Book (principally their interpretation of that Book) rather than in the Person that had come down out of heaven. What is faith anyway? Jn. 6:35 provides part of the answer: "Jesus said to them," 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.'" These are parallels, coming and believing meaning the same thing. Faith is not simply the acceptance of certain facts. A recent poll, referred to in this journal, indicates that a large percentage of the American people believe the facts of the gospel. That is fine insofar as it goes, but Jesus means more than that when he talks about faith. How many of those who accept *the* facts about Jesus have come to him in simple trusting faith? In *coming* to Jesus one has to *leave* something else, the world and all its enticements or perhaps a sectarian system, and that is too dear a price for many.

Until he comes to Jesus, the only answer there is, man will always hunger and thirst. Youth, riches, and pleasure will pass him by, leaving him broken and despondent in his old age. Jesus is his answer, and the Lord will accept him even at the eleventh hour --- and give him a full day's pay in love and mercy! But he must *come* --- empty handed, which means that he must *leave* (reject) what he has always loved and relied upon, his own stinking resources, centered in his selfish pride. So believing is coming. Ah, there's the rub, for that is one thing the world will not do, and sometimes the church as well, *go to Jesus.*

Believing is also obeying, as Jn. 3:36 indicates: “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.” Here faith and obedience are used interchangeably. We can only conclude that people who do not yield themselves to the Lordship of Jesus in trustful obedience do not really believe in him. Faithing is thus equal to obeying. --- *the Editor*

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## THE SIN OF WHINING

Let’s make sure we have the right word. I’m not talking about wining, which may or may not be a sin. After all, Jesus came both wining and dining, even if John the harbinger did not. Wining may be appropriate, but whining never, except perhaps when one is a child. So whining is always a sin, or something close to that. There must be a connection between our selfish pride and our impulse to whine, for we presume that our whines are justified. In our self-pity we “complain or beg in a childishly undignified way,” which is Webster’s definition of *whine.* For our purposes we can think of whining as complaining, which may be a far more serious sin than we realize. Far more serious than wining!

One of our readers sent me this poem, which set me to thinking about the sin of whining in my own life. Maybe it will touch your life as well:

Today upon a bus, I saw
A lovely girl with golden hair.
I envied her --- she seemed so young ---
I wished I were one-half as fair.
When suddenly she rose to leave
I saw her hobble down the aisle;
She had one leg, she used a crutch.
As she passed, she flashed a smile.
*O God, forgive me when I whine!*

*I have two legs, the world is mine!*

And when I stopped to buy some sweets,
The lad who sold them had such charm
I talked with him --- he seemed so glad ---
If I were late, ‘would do no harm.

And as I left he said to me:
"I thank you. You have been so kind."
You see," he added, "I am blind."
*O God, forgive me when I whine!*

*I have two eyes, the world is mine!*

With legs to take me where I'd go
With eyes to see the sunset's glow ---
*O God, forgive me when I whine!*
*I'm blessed indeed! The world is mine!*

Complaining is a sin of our affluent, undisciplined society. We do not know how to count our blessings because we have not learned how to do without. We are like spoiled children, like those that Jesus spoke of in Lk. 7:31-35, who would not make the expected responses when their playmates called to them. A whining generation is a satiated one, one that knows little about thanksgiving in that it has never learned gratitude.

When I read the above poem, I resolved once more that I would never complain about *anything.* The flesh makes it hard for us to do that; pride dictates that we should grumble when things do not go our way, especially when we know we are right! I am most inclined to complain over my children's fiscal irresponsibility. They waste their substance and then come to me for help. I complain over this injustice, pointing out that the reason I have money to bail them out is because I didn't do as they are now doing. I sometimes whine. Poor me, sacrificing all these years only to have my children waste it! I think it is all right for me to refuse, leaving them to sweat it out on their own, as I sometimes do, but *it is not all right for me to whine about it.* I am persuaded that complaining, mere fussing, is always wrong, for me at least (even if I am right), and I am seeking to overcome it.

I am tired playing the game of "Ain't it awful," whether in the family, the church, or the world. It does no good to fuss about inflation or complain about the way things go at church or grumble over the condition of the world. God placed me in this world to light a candle, not to complain about the darkness. I can do this with enthusiasm if I keep His goodness and mercy in view. That one leper that returned to Jesus praising God (with a loud voice, the record says) had the antidote for a grumbling tongue, *gratitude.* I am persuaded that if we are sufficiently grateful for our many blessings, we will *never* whine and complain. It is a terribly selfish sin! Jude included this sin when he listed those things deserving God's wrath: "These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own passions, loud-mouthed boasters, flattering people to gain advantage" (v. 16).

The apostle Paul says it all too plainly: “We must not put the Lord to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents; nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer” (1 Cor. 10:9-10).

*Nor grumble.* It is easy to go through life as a grumbler, one who never finds anything right and always looks on the dark side. It is sinful to so live, plainly sinful, and it is inexcusable for one who is resolved to follow Jesus. Did he ever grumble about anything? He was critical of what he found in men’s hearts, but he always pointed men to God and was always positive. He was not a complainer nor a fault-finder. One wise man has said it well: “Just as you are pleased at finding faults, you are displeased at finding perfections.” Our Lord was not that way, and we should not be that way.

Finally, whining and grumbling are sinful in that they reflect a life of discontent. Joy is fruit of the Spirit, while discontent is a work of the flesh. We have too much to do in this world than to wallow in impious discontent. Robert Southey teaches us a great lesson when he wrote:

> “A good man and a wise man may, at times, be angry with the world, and at times grieved for it; but no man was ever discontented with the world if he did his duty in it.”

That’s where I stand in reference to the church, especially the Church of Christ (the Lord in his mercy granted that I should be born into the right church!). I may have a lover’s quarrel, and I may sometimes be angry or grieved. But discontentment I renounce as Satanic, and I do not intend to grumble and complain. If and when I do, you can know to that extent I am not doing my duty. --- *the Editor*

The editor will be with a gathering of folk from various persuasions of the Movement to share in our common zheritage in Flint, Michigan, Jan. 8-10. For more information contact Hoy Ledbetter, 8494 Brush Hill Ct., Grand Blanc, Michigan 48439.

He will be with the Gold Coast Christian Men’s Retreat in Florida, Jan. 15-16. Contact Ron Mobley at First Christian Church in Boca Raton, 305-368-2513. Following this occasion he will be on campus of Milligan College for two weeks, teaching a course at Emmanuel School of Religion.

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## CAN WE KNOW WE ARE SAVED?

Most of us who were brought up in the Church of Christ are a little embarrassed upon being asked *Are you saved?* It is one of those very few religious questions that' we handle with frustrated uncertainty. We have ready answers for most everything, and we can usually give book, chapter, and verse for them, a practice that must surely have some virtue. When asked about our own salvation, we might still quote scripture, but we appear to chafe in the effort to relate the scripture to our own spiritual state.

The best way for you to see this for yourself is to find some serious moment in which .you can ask some of our people that sober question *Are you saved?* It should be asked with seriousness and concern, not in a spirit of challenge. It is predictable that almost without exception the reply will have an element of uncertainty about it. He isn't sure that he is saved. He may hope that he is, or he may even say he believes that he is, but usually he feels obligated to qualify his statement in some way, such as "If I have been faithful . . ."

It is my thesis in this study that the Christian can *know* that he is saved. He can and should be both emphatic and unequivocal in his avowal of salvation. He can speak with the assurance that Paul did in 2 Tim. 1: 12 and say, "I know and I am sure." We furthermore believe that hesitancy and uncertainty in this regard imply an inadequate personal faith. It also suggests that one sees his salvation as dependent upon his own works as it is on the grace of God. It is evident that Paul's certainty was based upon his trust in God's grace than in his own works. We all need to talk as Paul does here: "He saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works, but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago." (2 Tim. 1:9) If we trusted more in the virtue of God's grace and less in the virtue of our own works, we might be more certain of our salvation.

In Gal. 2:20 Paul writes: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." That sounds like a man who *knows.* It brings to mind Augustine's statement: "I believe, therefore I know." Is it not strange that we show more certainty about the loyalty of our friends and the fidelity of our wives than we do in our eternal salvation? Pascal's "The heart has its reasons that reason knows not of" may apply here. If a man's faith in his wife can be so strong that he can say he *knows,* surely his assurance of God's grace can be limitless.

A fitting question for those who suppose they have no right to be sure is *Are you saved today?* If one can't be sure, he may be saved one day but not the next. He may be ready for heaven one moment but not the next. Surely this is not the *living hope* that the scriptures speak of. If one's hope depends on how the balance sheet of debits and credits is at any given moment, then it is a dead hope. If he must be sure that he has no unforgiven sin, or that he has not been remiss in some good deed, before he can know he is saved, then the life of a Christian is doomed to misery and frustration. It is folly for a man to suppose that he just might be able to die at that moment when he has not sinned since praying for forgiveness, or that he might be fortunate enough to go into eternity on one of his good days when his life has been perfect.

What futility this is! We are to pity the man who supposes he can make it to heaven by climbing the stairway of moral perfection and good deeds. He will find himself scaling the stairs at a rapid pace at one moment and then falling flat on his face at the bottom of the stairs the next. By being punctilious in executing his various religious chores he will move six steps upward, and then amidst his pride slip twelve steps downward. This business of trying to make it to heaven through moral arithmetic is a losing cause.

This is the tragedy that Paul describes in Romans 7 when he says: "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do." Here is the frustration of trying to scale the stairway to heaven by one's own initiative, only to come tumbling down through human weakness. So Paul cries out in despair: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" His answer is the Christian's triumph: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

There is no other answer, and in this answer the Christian has assurance. And so Paul goes on to say what too few of us seem able to believe: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). And he goes on to say in Romans 8:37-39: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." *We are more than conquerors!* Without that kind of conviction Christian hope means very little.

Some of us have difficulty in enjoying an assurance of salvation because of fear of unforgiven sins. It is therefore part of our praying terminology in the assembly to say to God, "Forgive us all our unforgiven sins," as a kind of catch-all prayer for any sin we overlooked. We have no one in the Bible praying that way, and it may be that such a prayer reveals bad theology. There seems to be the idea that if death should catch us with "unforgiven sins" it would be too bad for us. We therefore seek to keep ourselves ready for

judgment by saying these magic words, as if God never forgives sins until He hears some such formula. One Christian I know answered the question “Should you die tonight do you believe you would go to heaven?” by saying “I am not sure; I’m afraid I might have some unforgiven sins.”

This is bad theology because once again it makes salvation a matter ‘of works. This sincere Christian certainly believed in the saving power of the Lord, but she also thought it necessary to perform certain rituals in order for God’s grace to be effective in her life. Such a one can pray “Forgive me of all my unforgiven sins” every day, or even several times a day, and perhaps feel some degree of assurance at the moment, but there is always the feeling of uncertainty in the anticipation of death. This is an awful religion to live, and one does not have to live it. When Luther was asked by his superiors in the Roman Church what he would give the people in place of the rosary, candles, holy water, etc. he replied “Jesus Christ.” And that is our answer to those who try to keep themselves ready by partaking of the Lord’s Supper every Sunday and going to church on holy Wednesday.

It is impossible for one to live a joyous life if there is any doubt about his salvation. Gal. 5:22 speaks of joy as a fruit of the Spirit, and Rom. 14: 17 refers to “Joy in the Holy Spirit.” Joy is that sweet satisfaction that victory is ours through Christ --- victory over sin, death and the grave. A prisoner is filled with joy at the news that the governor has pardoned him. His joy is limited only by the measure of confidence he has in the governor’s word. If he is sure the governor will do what he says, his joy knows no bounds. A man who can be certain that God has forgiven him, and that his eternal salvation is assured, will be filled with joy. Joy is thus related to hope. Uncertainly begets not only hopelessness, but a life of despair. The mission of the Holy Spirit, therefore, is to fill our hearts with hope, thus making life a joyous and thrilling experience.

Notice the assurance with which Paul writes to Titus in Chapter 3.

“He saved us,” he says with confidence, and then explains why: “Not because of deeds done by us in righteousness,” as if to suggest that if it *were* by our own merit, there would be nothing to depend on. “But in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life.”

This is beautiful religion. Paul sees a rich outpouring of the Holy Spirit as a basis of hope of eternal life. He can speak with assurance of salvation because of the grace and mercy of God. People who are uneasy about their salvation are concerned about their works before God. Since Paul was aware that his salvation was not a matter of “deeds

done by us in righteousness," but wholly a matter of grace and mercy, he could have confidence.

A confident faith is hardly expressed anywhere as boldly as it is in John's epistle. *Know* is one of John's favorite terms, and if the apostle in the many "We know" passages could express such confidence in the face of a militant Gnosticism, which denied the realty of the Word in the flesh, then we too can be sure.

In his short epistle John uses "We know" or "You know" a dozen times, revealing his assurance of a meaningful and abiding relationship between Christ and his disciples. Let us notice some of these passages as they are rendered by the *New English Bible.*

"Here and now, dear friends, we are God's children; what we shall be has not yet been disclosed, but we know that when it is disclosed we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope before him purifies himself, as Christ is pure." (1 John 3:2-3)

We know that we shall be like Him! What a blessed assurance! And notice that we are told that if we have this hope we purify ourselves as Christ is pure. Hope has a cleansing effect on our lives, keeping us from becoming attached to the world and its many allurements.

"My brothers, do not be surprised if the world hates you. We for our part have crossed over from death to life; this we know, because we love our brothers." (1 John 3:13-14)

We know that we have passed from death to life! Life in the Son is indeed precious, and blessed is the man who *knows* that that life is his. John sees love of the brethren as the sure sign of passing from death to life Can our quarreling, divided brotherhood pass that test?

"This letter is to assure you that you have eternal life." (1 John 5:13) Other versions say: ". . . . that you may know that you have eternal life." Is he not also writing to *us* so that we might be assured that we have eternal life. He speaks not of a *quantitative* life, one that will go on forever, even though this is true; but he speaks of a *qualitative* life, a *kind* of life, which is life in the Son. We have this life now, and there is no reason why we should not always have it. Jesus said to Martha at the tomb of Lazarus: "Whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11 :26). The *life* that he referred to there is the "eternal life" that John says we have *now.*

Notice how John closes his epistle with a series of "We know" statements.

"We know that no child of God is a sinner; it is the Son of God who keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot touch him." (5:18)

"We know that we are God's family, while the whole godless world lies in the power of the evil one." (5:19)

"We know that the Son of God has come and given us understanding to know him who is real; indeed we are in him who is real, since we are in his Son Jesus Christ." (5:20)

Such confidence gives us a blessed resource of power. We too can know that Christ is real (at home, at work, at play), and that we are in Him who is real. We can be equally certain that He will keep us safe and that the evil one cannot touch us. What a blessed peace! What joy!

We have brought ourselves up to be a strange people in matters of this kind. Even when we seem certain that we have the truth, that we are indeed Christ's only church on earth, we are at the same time suspicious of anyone who speaks with the assurance expressed in the foregoing passages. We are certain that we are doctrinally right, but we are less than sure of our own personal salvation.

This may be accounted for by the way we use the term *truth.* To John it meant a right relationship to Christ, as it did to all the writers of the scriptures who speak with such assurance. "If we walk in the light. . ." means *being in Christ* to John, while to our people it means *being right about everything taught in the New Testament.* So, if one follows interpretations of our preachers, who have to assume infallibility, he can be right on all points of doctrine, and this is what "having the truth" is made to mean.

My position is that a man may be innocently involved in many erroneous interpretations --- "guilty of a thousand errors" as Campbell said of Origin --- and still be *right* in his relationship to Christ. While it is true that his relationship with Christ may be strengthened and deepened as he overcomes his erroneous thinking, it is nonetheless the case that Christ is his *now,* that he has eternal life *now,* and that he can know that he is saved. If one had to wait until he could be sure of all his ideas about the Bible before he could be sure of his salvation, then the confidence that Paul and John speak of would never be possible.

We are a people that can be sure we are *right* (that we indeed have *the truth)* and yet unsure about our salvation simply because we do not know what *being right* means, do not know what *the truth* is.

"The truth" has little or nothing to do with questions such as instrumental music, the Sunday School, premillennialism, church cooperation. There is surely truth and error involved in such questions, but "the truth" as used in scripture is something entirely different: it is the reality that God has acted in history by giving the world the Christ, who has come in the flesh, bringing deliverance from sin.

It is in responding to “the truth,” which is the gospel, that makes a man *right* before God. He can never have *the truth* or *be right* by either his own works or by the measure of his own knowledge. One may be doctrinally right about everything and still not have *the truth.* And he may be wrong about matters of doctrine and still have *the truth.*

The point is that *being right* and having *the truth* in scriptural terms has to do with knowing a Person. The early Christians knew the Person before they ever had the New Testament scriptures. They *knew* they were saved long before the *New Testament* made its appearance. When the scriptures did appear, their assurance of salvation was not jeopardized by any errors in understanding. The saints at Rome were no less sure of their salvation if, when they read Paul’s letter to them, they did not understand it all. Peter complains that brother Paul wrote many things that are hard to understand, but he does not suggest that one’s salvation is dependent upon an understanding of them, though he does warn against *twisting* such scriptures, which implies a deliberate intention to make a passage mean what it does not say (2 Pet. 3:16). Surely one can be honestly mistaken about the scriptures and still know “the truth” in that he is in Christ.

If it is fatal to make salvation dependent upon book knowledge, it is no less fatal to make it dependent upon one’s works. “Now to one who works, his wages are not reckoned as a gift but as his due. And to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness. (Rom. 4:4-5)

If being saved is a matter of work, then we can never be sure, for we cannot know just how much is due us at any given time. But at no time would our works be sufficient to save us. So may God grant that we be among those “who do not work” --- meaning that they do not trust in their own work or knowledge --- but among those “who trust him who justifies the ungodly.” --- *the Editor*

All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen. -- *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

I is poor faith that needs fair weather for standing firm. That alone is true faith that stands the foulest weather. -- Gandhi

Christian faith is nothing else but the soul's venture. It ventures to Christ, in opposition to all legal terrors. It ventures on Christ in opposition to our guiltiness. It ventures for Christ, in opposition to all difficulties and discouragements. -- *William Bridges*

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## THE INTENT AND THE DEED

*Robert Meyers*

The other day someone passed you on the street and spoke that brief but pleasant abbreviation you have heard a thousand times:

"Morning!"

How did you interpret? If you are woodenly literal-minded, you might have said to yourself, "Oh, really? Who *doesn't* know that it's morning?" The speaker's actual word would have been no more than a declaration to you, if you had taken it at face value.

But of course you didn't, because no one does. Everyone knows that when a man says "Morning!" he really means "Good morning to you," or maybe something like "Great morning, isn't it? I feel fine, I hope you do." We sense what the intention is, and we respond to the intention, not to the bald literalness of the single word he spoke.

When someone asks, "How are you?" as he passes on the street, we never stop to say, "Well, my pulse is 78, my temperature is normal, my spleen is slightly below par, and my callouses hurt." We know the *intention* is to say something rather like this: "You are a human being, so am I. We meet, and 1 greet you with an expression which really means only 'hello' and suggests that I wish to be friendly." So we accept the intention we sense, and we say, "Fine," which really means something like this: "I understand what you are saying to me by your brief question, I appreciate it, I am responding with a word of good will, although I don't expect you to take it literally since something is nearly always wrong with the human machinery and I'm really not 'fine' in all ways."

Life would get intolerably complex if we had to go through all that, consciously. We have shorthand expressions which mean quite other than their literal sense. We understand men in such cases in terms of their intentions, not what they literally say.

It is true in other cultures in the same way. When a Frenchman asks, "Comment allez-vous?" he is not really expecting you to answer, "I go by oxcart," or "I go on my two feet, as you can plainly see." His "How are you going?" is a collection of words which express

*this* intention: “I greet you courteously as another human being; I hope you are doing well.”

Whether we wish to study the linguistic principle or not, we all understand this quite well in practice. Children often intend to show us love, but wind up ruining our house or breaking a treasured object of art. We accept the intention for the deed.

We understand that when a man hates so passionately that only time, place and opportunity keep him from killing, he is a murderer in the world of the spirit already. He is judged by his intention. He may never perform the deed, because of limiting circumstances, but his God has already been pained by his murder.

We all explain that when Jesus said a man who lusts after a woman has committed adultery with her already, he is judging intentions and not deeds. Purely selfish lust is an ugly thing, never a beautiful thing; when a man’s heart is so full of it that only time, place and opportunity prevent him from external gratification, he is guilty already in the eyes of God.

Nothing of this is new; we have heard such things all our lives, and we act accordingly. The only thing we seem unable to do is turn it around and make it apply to religious obedience in the way Paul does. We shall consider an example a little later, but first we need a clear statement of what we mean. Here it is:

If a man is *guilty* because he meant to do a bad thing and was hindered by circumstances, why is not a man *justified* who meant to do a good thing and was kept from it by circumstances?

If a man wants with all his heart to follow God’s will and obey God’s requirements for him, but is prevented by circumstance from doing this completely, will not God accept the intention for the deed? Would it be fair of God to accept the intention of a murderously angry man for the deed, but refuse to accept the intention of an eager and searching disciple for the deed, provided in each case there was a similar situation: circumstances kept each man from fulfilling his desire?

People are forever asking about the unbaptized masses around the world. They seem horrified to think God might accept some of them without their having been baptized, despite the fact that they may never have heard about baptism, or heard correctly. But on the basis of what we have just considered, there is no problem. Where a man *intends* to do God’s will as perfectly as he can know to do it, but is hindered beyond his control in the knowledge of that will, God accepts the intention for the deed. Such a man is baptized already, in terms of ultimate judgment, although he may be deprived here of some good things which fuller knowledge could bring him.

If this sounds strange, study the principle Paul develops in Romans 2:25ff. Read, for greater clarity, in a modern speech version, and substitute (as Alexander Campbell once did) the word “baptism” for the word “circumcision.” If you care enough to deduce a general principle from a solution to a local problem, you can learn a profound thing about how to deal with men who have not yet come to your measure of knowledge.

By the time you read this we will have mailed *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches,* by Leroy Garrett, to those who ordered it. We believe you will find it an attractive volume, informative and easy to read. If you have not ordered a copy, we will be pleased to send you one at 19.95. If you pay in advance, we will pay the postage, but we will be pleased to bill you if you prefer. We are delighted with the sale of this book, sight unseen.

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*Pilgrimage of Joy . . . 60*

## LAST TIME AROUND

*W. Carl Ketcherside*

In this my final article in the present series, I want to suggest some of the things which I think I learned, and which have made such a noteworthy change in my attitude toward others. I constantly hear the charge that I am not the same man I used to be. I always answer that if I learn more tomorrow I will not be the same as I am now. I realize that I could skip these things. By doing so, my stock would rise greatly in some circles, but I would neither be faithful to my own convictions, nor loyal to Jesus, who is my only Lord.

Perhaps the most profound change came with the realization that the Church of Christ was simply another denomination and a sect. There is a difference. To denominate means to give a name or title to. To do this in order to separate and segregate those who wear it from other believers in Jesus is sectarian. To select a title that is found in the scriptures gives added weight to the divisive arguments which always result. And, while the

expression “the church of Christ” does not occur in the sacred book, this does not deter some of the trivial arguments used to justify it as *the name* of the family of God.

It became obvious to me quite early that we had built up a System around the name we had selected, and we were seeking to save man by getting him into that system. We were going the same route as the Church of God, the Nazarene Church, or the Church of God in Christ. We had been betrayed into thinking that by conforming to a few items one becomes pleasing to God. But each sect has a different set of items. Each party in the church of Christ has a different set. All of these are determined by honest, but stubborn men, who value their own distinctives above the unity of God’s people. But one is not saved by being orthodox. He is not saved by a System, but by a Savior.

I was made to realize that the sheep of God were not all in any sectarian fold, but were scattered over the partisan hills, Various things have been done to bring them together. Reformations have occurred at various times. These inevitably produced movements which were doomed to multiply the divisions. One reason for this was the designation “churches” for the various sects. They are not churches by any stretch of the imagination. There is only one church. There never has been but one. There will never be another. Every saved person on earth is a member of the one body. By the will of God we are all one, by the actions of men we are all divided.

People in the sects are not necessarily our enemies. They are flesh and blood. They hurt, feel pain, and have nosebleed. And we wrestle not against flesh and blood. It is easier to fight persons than to fight principalities and powers. It is easier to war against persons than to go up against the unseen power that controls this dark world. We are carnal and we like to see our shots reach home. We can see people wince, dodge and grow angry, and it makes us exult. We must completely change our battle strategy. We have been fighting other believers.

People in the sects worship the same God, believe in the Sonship of Jesus, read the same Bible, sing the same songs, meet on the same day and hour, strive for the same heaven and fear the same hell as do we. Surely it was the malevolence of Satan which caused us to direct our weapons against them instead of “against spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil.” There is not one indication in God’s Word that Paul, if he had been confronted with the same situation as ourselves would have turned his hand against every man and rejoiced that every man had turned his hand against him.

These people are hostages to Systems. From birth they have grown up and been reared in such Systems. Or in manhood, in the midst of the tragedy of the human predicament, they have fled to these Systems, as to cities of refuge. Our task is not to beat or belabor hostages. It is not to get the better of them. It is not to kill them. Any nation which kills

hostages is inhumane, a violator of all basic human rights. We are to free hostages. But we cannot do so by contriving another System. Our walls are no better than those of other prisons. We must bring them to Christ and not introduce them to another custodian. This is the most difficult thing to do in our generation. It requires a vision of the unseen, a faith which looks beyond.

Another thing which I learned had to do with worship. I had grown up believing there were five acts of "public worship." These had to be performed on the first day of the week when the brethren met together, almost as a ritual. One of the insights I received from my study of the Word was that with the coming of Christ *all things* were made new. At the same time "old things had passed away." I guess it was just too much to believe that all things were made new. I still clung to a few old ones. They may have passed away, but I needed them for a security blanket. I held on to some of them like a baby retains the habit of "thumb-sucking." I continued to do so until I came to trust in Jesus like Abraham did.

I shall never forget the afternoon that I was reading and meditating upon Jesus' visit with the Samaritan woman at the well curb at Sychar. It suddenly became clear to me that he lifted the subject of worship completely out of the realm of "the proper place." It was no longer a question of this mountain or Jerusalem. It was no longer what our fathers worshipped. It was not a question of being in the right place. There was no right place for the simple reason that there was no wrong place. It was a matter of Spirit and truth for the true worshipper.

I could see that in Christ there were no holy places, holy things, or holy days. The idea of dedicating or consecrating a pile of brick or stone to God eventually became obnoxious to me. I came to truly believe that "the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with men's hands." No carpenters, no brick masons, no hod-carriers could negate that statement. I separated myself completely from the Jewish concept of speaking about a certain part of the building as a sanctuary. The idea of dedicating an organ, or a fountain, or something else to the God of the universe became silly, and what is worse, a sin. It became obvious that wherever I was it was a holy place because I was there. God dwelt in me. It was not a matter of going to a temple. *I was the temple!*

Whatever I did in my body became worship, when done in deference to the majesty and glory of God. The passage, "Whatsoever you do in word or deed," took on a new and deeper meaning. God was as interested in how I talked to my grandchildren on Monday as he was in what I said to a group sitting solemnly and gravely before me on Sunday mornings. He was as concerned in how I mowed my lawn, fixed a flat tire, or shopped at the grocery, as he was in what I did in Bible Class. It was a mind-boggling experience, a

kind of explosive high to realize that everything --- and I do mean everything --- was worship of the Almighty.

I could see clearly how the “five acts” had been blown up into something that could be used as a hoe handle or baseball bat to beat people into submission. One of the best examples is “the act of giving.” Out of the reasoning on this point came an accumulation of money, or hoarding. This created a treasury which necessitated a treasurer. This demanded business meetings and the reading of the treasurer’s report, and so on, ad infinitum. I do not think that any of these are wrong. They are not sinful. But the idea that they are a part of God’s revelation, or that they are found in I Corinthians 16, is about as far-fetched as the idea that the synthesis of Thomas Aquinas is God’s plan for his people. All of this talk about who can be helped out of “the treasury” and who must be helped before it gets to “the treasury” is just so much poppycock. It has all been distilled from feverish, factional hearts. It is divisive by its very nature.

One thing which helped to free me from the insufferable slavery of the sect was the realization that fellowship with God is on the basis of a personal covenant with the divine. We are not in fellowship with Christ because we are in fellowship with others, but we are in fellowship with others because we are in fellowship with Christ. The vertical relationship precedes and makes possible the horizontal and not the reverse. The vertical is primary, the horizontal is secondary. Fellowship is the sharing of a common life, and the life in which we share is eternal life. Men have no control over eternal life. They cannot admit one to it. They cannot discharge one from it. It is foolish for mere weak mortals to talk about receiving one into the fellowship. It is absurd to talk about withdrawing fellowship from him. That is institutional or organizational twaddle. It is a demonstration of “peanut-sized” thinking.

God did not entrust so wonderful a thing as the salvation of a single soul to the whim or discretion of sinful and changeable man, although He made men as His human agents to carry the Good News. But He enters into a personal and direct covenant with each one of us. He does so on the basis of divine grace. No human intermediary is required. No parent can make a covenant for his child. No one in authority can make a covenant for those who are subjects. Human favor has nothing to do with it. It is tragic that we have done with the word “testament” what we have done with many other majestic terms utilized by the Holy Spirit. We have whittled them down in our attempt to make them relevant to our human predicament. It does not take a lot of study to see that the old covenant does not consist of 39 books, nor the new covenant of 27.

We are distinctly told that the new covenant was not written with ink. All of the records, epistles, and even the apocalypse were written with ink. On this we have the testimony of the writers. There is a difference between the new covenant and the new covenant scriptures which grew out of it. The new covenant is written on fleshy tablets of the heart. It consists of the Agreement into which I entered with God and to which I subscribed. I surrendered to Him absolutely, unequivocally, until death silences my tongue or forces me to drop the pen from my nerveless fingers. The new covenant is not a written code. It is not a compilation of laws, statutes and judgments. We are not under law but under grace.

Along with this I learned the difference between the gospel and the doctrine of the apostles. The gospel the *euaggelion,* the good news of what God did for us when we were helpless to do anything for ourselves. It is to be proclaimed. It is God's message for the unsaved. One cannot evangelize saved persons. The doctrine is for those in the body. It is not for the world any more than the gospel is for the church. I learned this from Alexander Campbell. Then I found out that he had learned it from Dr. George Campbell of Aberdeen, and from Dr. James McKnight of Edinburgh. So I obtained their valuable works and studied them, all the while becoming more convinced of the distinction.

Indeed I am thoroughly agreed with Alexander Campbell that there can never be a thorough reformation, so long as we ignore this vital principle. It is foundational to our goal. It is basic to its achievement. It is vastly more than a mere argument over semantics, or an empty discussion of words. The profundity of it, once seen, will commend itself to the genuine scholar as possessing the greatest potential for unity. It is saddening to see shallow minds which never had an original thought, denying it as a kind of joke.

Now that I have run my little course from birth up to the time when I discontinued publication of Mission Messenger, I shall bow out gently thanking you for the great patience you have exhibited in reading these monthly accounts. Brother Garrett has shown more than ordinary longsuffering with me and I appreciate it a great deal. Nell joins with me in this farewell and in the fervent prayer that God will bless all of you very richly indeed. Grace and peace be unto you!

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## BOOK NOTES

Carl Ketcherside has some issues of *Mission Messenger* from 1969 through 1975 that are free for the asking, though you should send postage. Write to him at 139 Signal Hill Dr., St. Louis 63121.

Some of our more recent subscribers like to know what we have been saying in years past. A good way to get a feel of this is to let us send you 18 back issues, selected at random, for only 3.00. We mail these with the next issue of the paper, so there may be some delay.

*The Forgotten Father* by Thomas A. Smail is an "Abba, Father" book in that it shows that the Christian faith is basically a relationship with God as Father. Now that we've had a Jesus movement and a charismatic movement, it is well to realize that the Christian gospel is itself a Father movement. You will appreciate the emphasis of this book. 6.95 postpaid.

I. Howard Marshall's *Last Supper and Lord's Supper* deals not only with the Supper in the early church and the NT, but with religious meals in general in the ancient world, and it makes a case for celebrating it on each Lord's day. It also points to the importance of maintaining the symbolism of the one loaf and common cup. 6.95 postpaid.

One of the lesser known but most valuable volumes in Restoration studies is *Recollections of Men of Faith* by W. C. Rogers, who knew personally those whose sketches he prepared, including Campbell, Johnson, Rains, Hall, Creath, Rogers. The anecdotes are lifted right out of their lives. He even tells of Campbell chewing tobacco! 5.25 postpaid.

William Barclay was a warm, delightful person and this is reflected in his writings, which continue to be widely read. You will delight in his *In the Hands of God*, meditations drawn from daily life, which we can supply at 5.25 postpaid. A weightier, studious book, based on the names and titles given to Jesus is his *Jesus As They Saw Him*, at 5.95 postpaid. His treatment of "Son of Man" is especially impressive.

If you are serious about studying with a concordance, we suggest *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, which doubles as a lexicon. It may well be the most valuable help that one can have for serious Bible study. 19.95 postpaid.

If you are interested in questions such as the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture and the place of higher criticism, simply and cogently argued, try reading *The Bible and Higher Criticism* by Harry Boer. 4.50 pp.

I recommended *Christ the Controversialist* by John R. W. Stott to a friend in Ft. Worth and she reports that it is the best book she ever read. It is such an important book that we keep it in stock all the time and hope it will stay in print for many years. By all means, you should have a copy at 4.50 pp.

We are now stocking the *Good News Bible*, which may be the most reliable and most readable of the "modern" versions. It also has frequent headings and helpful drawings. We suggest the sturdy denim binding at 8.95, a handsome volume indeed. The giant print is also available at 22.95 in burgundy leather. These are the entire Bible.

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## READERS' EXCHANGE

We think your paper is tops and hesitate to criticize or make suggestions. However, I feel I must do so. Just what do you hope to accomplish in forsaking the generic he/him for she/her? You've had a little fun with it, so why not return to the normal way of speaking? It is just possible that some of your subscribers might take you for a nut or a secret agent of Bella Abzug and the woman's lib. No fooling. --- *Willard Vanderford, Tulsa, Ok.*

(I've accomplished my purpose, *to get people to think!* By whose standard is *he* generic, referring to both sexes? Why not let *she* be generic? It is but one more reflection of a tradition of male dominance. Why should Scripture read, "He that hath the Son hath life" instead of "Anyone who has the Son has life"? Bible translators are presently seeking ways to correct this. I have not forsaken the he/him thing, but occasionally use she/her, so as to make a point. The sisters love it! When I taught at a woman's university we had a dean (an English professor, who else!) who insisted on referring to "the student" as he/him, when they were all women, insisting it was generic! But I am not necessarily a women's libber. Just a libber! ---*Ed.)*

I'm glad that our son phoned you concerning his approval of "Jesus: The Restoration Ideal." I too agree with the article. You may recall that I phoned you several months ago to the effect that "the party spirit" (a work of the flesh) is our real problem. --- *E. L. Keesling, Arlington, Va.*

I continue to appreciate RR and your stimulating and helpful writings. God has used you to bless so many through your writing. Keep up the good work until He comes. ---*Roy Weece, Columbia, Mo.*

(If the Lord wills, Ouida and I will do our thing with this journal "through the 80's," as we are putting it, which will make four decades, which may be too long. But we take the months and the issues one at a time, and no one knows the time or the hour we will close down. We are only saying that we are at His disposal. *Until He comes!* It is an interesting

way to put it. If my friend, David Reagan, whose favorite sermon is "Jesus Is Coming Soon," is right, the Missouri brother's exhortation is in order. I like the idea, editing this paper until Jesus comes, but that *could* make me the editor with the greatest longevity in history. Who really knows? One thing for sure, I will rejoice to see Him. When I asked Carl Ketcherside about seeing Jesus, he said, "I'll hug His neck." The time may not be all that important, but the reality of it is. --- *Ed.)*

I have been a member of the Lord's body (and of the Church of Christ) for 25 years, and some of my most encouraging moments have been in reading your publication and learning that all Christians are not blind. Fortunately I am now part of a great fellowship with the Church of Christ in Belle Chasse, La. We are trying to relate to people's needs. --- *Dan Jones, New Orleans, La.*

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